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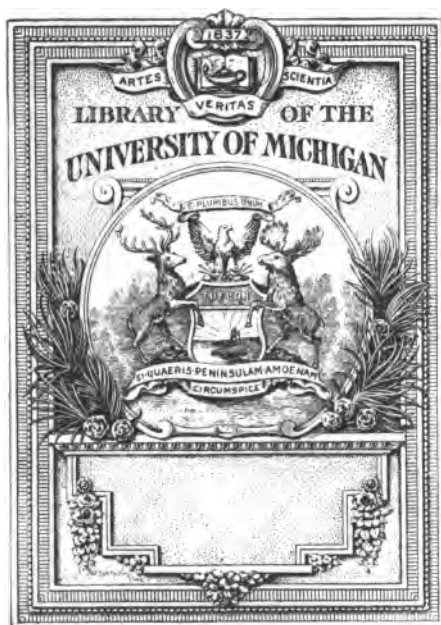
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# **SONGS OF KABIR**



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TORONTO

# SONGS OF KABIR

TRANSLATED BY  
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WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF  
EVELYN UNDERHILL

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## INTRODUCTION

**T**HE poet Kabīr, a selection from whose songs is here for the first time offered to English readers, is one of the most interesting personalities in the history of Indian mysticism. Born in or near Benares, of Mohammedan parents, and probably about the year 1440, he became in early life a disciple of the celebrated Hindu ascetic Rāmānanda. Rāmānanda had brought to Northern India the religious revival which Rāmanuja, the great twelfth-century reformer of Brāhmanism, had initiated in the South. This revival was in part a reaction against the increasing formalism of the orthodox cult, in part an assertion of the demands of the heart as against

the intense intellectualism of the Vedānta philosophy, the exaggerated monism which that philosophy proclaimed. It took in Rāmanuja's preaching the form of an ardent personal devotion to the God Vishnu, as representing the personal aspect of the Divine Nature: that mystical "religion of love" which everywhere makes its appearance at a certain level of spiritual culture, and which creeds and philosophies are powerless to kill.

Though such a devotion is indigenous in Hinduism, and finds expression in some of the oldest parts of the Bhagavad Gītā, there was in its mediæval revival a large element of syncretism. Rāmānanda, through whom its spirit is said to have reached Kabīr, appears to have been a man of wide religious culture, and full of missionary enthusiasm. Living at the moment in which the impassioned poetry and deep philoso-

phy of the great Persian mystics, Attār, Sādī, Jalālu'ddīn Rūmī, and Hāfiz, were exercising a powerful influence on the religious thought of India, he dreamed of reconciling this intense and personal Mohammedan mysticism with the traditional theology of Brāhmanism. Some have regarded both these great religious leaders as influenced also by Christian thought and life: but as this is a point upon which competent authorities hold widely divergent views, its discussion is not attempted here. We may safely assert, however, that in their teachings, two — perhaps three — apparently antagonistic streams of intense spiritual culture met, as Jewish and Hellenistic thought met in the early Christian Church: and it is one of the outstanding characteristics of Kabīr's genius that he was able in his poems to fuse them into one.

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A great religious reformer, the founder of a sect to which nearly a million northern Hindus still belong, it is yet supremely as a mystical poet that Kabir lives for us. His fate has been that of many revealers of Reality. A hater of religious exclusivism, and seeking above all things to initiate men into the liberty of the children of God, his followers have honoured his memory by re-erecting in a new place the barriers which he laboured to cast down. But his wonderful songs survive, the spontaneous expressions of his vision and his love; and it is by these, not by the didactic teachings associated with his name, that he makes his immortal appeal to the heart. In these poems a wide range of mystical emotion is brought into play: from the loftiest abstractions, the most other-worldly passion for the Infinite, to the most intimate and personal realiza-

tion of God, expressed in homely metaphors and religious symbols drawn indifferently from Hindu and Mohammedan belief. It is impossible to say of their author that he was Brāhman or Sūfī, Vedāntist or Vaishnavite. He is, as he says himself, "At once the child of Allah and of Rām." That Supreme Spirit, Whom he knew and adored, and to Whose joyous friendship he sought to induct the souls of other men, transcended whilst He included all metaphysical categories, all credal definitions; yet each contributed something to the description of that Infinite and Simple Totality Who revealed Himself, according to their measure, to the faithful lovers of all creeds.

Kabīr's story is surrounded by contradictory legends, on none of which reliance can be placed. Some of these emanate from a Hindu, some from a

Mohammedan source, and claim him by turns as a Sūfī and a Brāhman saint. His name, however, is practically a conclusive proof of Moslem ancestry: and the most probable tale is that which represents him as the actual or adopted child of a Mohammedan weaver of Benares, the city in which the chief events of his life took place.

In fifteenth-century Benares the syncretistic tendencies of Bhakti religion had reached full development. Sūfis and Brāhmans appear to have met in disputation: the most spiritual members of both creeds frequenting the teachings of Rāmānanda, whose reputation was then at its height. The boy Kabīr, in whom the religious passion was innate, saw in Rāmānanda his destined teacher; but knew how slight were the chances that a Hindu guru would accept a Mohammedan as disciple. He therefore hid upon the

steps of the river Ganges, where Rāmānanda was accustomed to bathe; with the result that the master, coming down to the water, trod upon his body unexpectedly, and exclaimed in his astonishment, "Rām! Rām!" — the name of the incarnation under which he worshipped God. Kabīr then declared that he had received the mantra of initiation from Rāmānanda's lips, and was by it admitted to discipleship. In spite of the protests of orthodox Brāhman and Mohammedans, both equally annoyed by this contempt of theological landmarks, he persisted in his claim; thus exhibiting in action that very principle of religious synthesis which Rāmānanda had sought to establish in thought. Rāmānanda appears to have accepted him, and though Mohammedan legends speak of the famous Sūfi Pīr, Takki of Jhanī, as Kabīr's master in later life, the



Hindu saint is the only human teacher to whom in his songs he acknowledges indebtedness.

The little that we know of Kabir's life contradicts many current ideas concerning the Oriental mystic. Of the stages of discipline through which he passed, the manner in which his spiritual genius developed, we are completely ignorant. He seems to have remained for years the disciple of Rāmānanda, joining in the theological and philosophical arguments which his master held with all the great Mullahs and Brāhmans of his day; and to this source we may perhaps trace his acquaintance with the terms of Hindu and Sūfī philosophy. He may or may not have submitted to the traditional education of the Hindu or the Sūfī contemplative: it is clear, at any rate, that he never adopted the life of the professional ascetic, or retired from the

world in order to devote himself to bodily mortifications and the exclusive pursuit of the contemplative life. Side by side with his interior life of adoration, its artistic expression in music and words — for he was a skilled musician as well as a poet — he lived the sane and diligent life of the Oriental craftsman. All the legends agree on this point: that Kabīr was a weaver, a simple and unlettered man, who earned his living at the loom. Like Paul the tentmaker, Boehme the cobbler, Bunyan the tinker, Tersteegen the ribbon-maker, he knew how to combine vision and industry; the work of his hands helped rather than hindered the impassioned meditation of his heart. Hating mere bodily austerities, he was no ascetic, but a married man, the father of a family — a circumstance which Hindu legends of the monastic type vainly attempt to

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conceal or explain — and it was from out of the heart of the common life that he sang his rapturous lyrics of divine love. Here his works corroborate the traditional story of his life. Again and again he extols the life of home, the value and reality of diurnal existence, with its opportunities for love and renunciation; pouring contempt upon the professional sanctity of the Yogi, who “has a great beard and matted locks, and looks like a goat,” and on all who think it necessary to flee a world pervaded by love, joy, and beauty — the proper theatre of man’s quest — in order to find that One Reality Who has “spread His form of love throughout *all* the world.”<sup>1</sup>

It does not need much experience of ascetic literature to recognize the boldness and originality of this attitude in such a time and place. From the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Poems Nos. XXI, XL, XLIII, LXVI, LXXVI.

point of view of orthodox sanctity, whether Hindu or Mohammedan, Kabir was plainly a heretic; and his frank dislike of all institutional religion, all external observance — which was as thorough and as intense as that of the Quakers themselves — completed, so far as ecclesiastical opinion was concerned, his reputation as a dangerous man. The “simple union” with Divine Reality which he perpetually extolled, as alike the duty and the joy of every soul, was independent both of ritual and of bodily austerities; the God whom he proclaimed was “neither in Kaaba nor in Kailāsh.” Those who sought Him needed not to go far; for He awaited discovery everywhere, more accessible to “the washerwoman and the carpenter” than to the self-righteous holy man.<sup>1</sup> Therefore the whole apparatus of piety, Hindu and Moslem

<sup>1</sup> Poems I, II, XLI.

alike — the temple and mosque, idol and holy water, scriptures and priests — were denounced by this inconveniently clear-sighted poet as mere substitutes for reality; dead things intervening between the soul and its love —

The images are all lifeless, they cannot speak :  
I know, for I have cried aloud to them.  
The Purāna and the Korān are mere words :  
lifting up the curtain, I have seen.<sup>1</sup>

This sort of thing cannot be tolerated by any organized church; and it is not surprising that Kabīr, having his head-quarters in Benares, the very centre of priestly influence, was subjected to considerable persecution. The well-known legend of the beautiful courtesan sent by the Brāhmans to tempt his virtue, and converted, like the Magdalen, by her sudden encounter with the initiate of a higher love, preserves the memory of the fear and dis-

<sup>1</sup> Poems XLII, LXV, LXVII.

like with which he was regarded by the ecclesiastical powers. Once at least, after the performance of a supposed miracle of healing, he was brought before the Emperor Sikandar Lodī, and charged with claiming the possession of divine powers. But Sikandar Lodī, a ruler of considerable culture, was tolerant of the eccentricities of saintly persons belonging to his own faith. Kabīr, being of Mohammedan birth, was outside the authority of the Brāhmans, and technically classed with the Sūfis, to whom great theological latitude was allowed. Therefore, though he was banished in the interests of peace from Benares, his life was spared. This seems to have happened in 1495, when he was nearly sixty years of age; it is the last event in his career of which we have definite knowledge. Thenceforth he appears to have moved about amongst various

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cities of northern India, the centre of a group of disciples; continuing in exile that life of apostle and poet of love to which, as he declares in one of his songs, he was destined "from the beginning of time." In 1518, an old man, broken in health, and with hands so feeble that he could no longer make the music which he loved, he died at Maghar near Gorakhpur.

A beautiful legend tells us that after his death his Mohammedan and Hindu disciples disputed the possession of his body; which the Mohammedans wished to bury, the Hindus to burn. As they argued together, Kabir appeared before them, and told them to lift the shroud and look at that which lay beneath. They did so, and found in the place of the corpse a heap of flowers; half of which were buried by the Mohammedans at Maghar, and half carried by the Hindus to the holy

city of Benares to be burned — fitting conclusion to a life which had made fragrant the most beautiful doctrines of two great creeds.

## II

The poetry of mysticism might be defined on the one hand as a temperamental reaction to the vision of Reality: on the other, as a form of prophecy. As it is the special vocation of the mystical consciousness to mediate between two orders, going out in loving adoration towards God and coming home to tell the secrets of Eternity to other men; so the artistic self-expression of this consciousness has also a double character. It is love-poetry, but love-poetry which is often written with a missionary intention.

Kabir's songs are of this kind: outbirths at once of rapture and of charity. Written in the popular Hindī, not in



the literary tongue, they were deliberately addressed — like the vernacular poetry of Jacopone da Todi and Richard Rolle — to the people rather than to the professionally religious class; and all must be struck by the constant employment in them of imagery drawn from the common life, the universal experience. It is by the simplest metaphors, by constant appeals to needs, passions, relations which all men understand — the bridegroom and bride, the guru and disciple, the pilgrim, the farmer, the migrant bird — that he drives home his intense conviction of the reality of the soul's intercourse with the Transcendent. There are in his universe no fences between the "natural" and "supernatural" worlds; everything is a part of the creative Play of God, and therefore — even in its humblest details — capable of revealing the Player's mind.

This willing acceptance of the here-and-now as a means of representing supernal realities is a trait common to the greatest mystics. For them, when they have achieved at last the true theopathic state, all aspects of the universe possess equal authority as sacramental declarations of the Presence of God; and their fearless employment of homely and physical symbols — often startling and even revolting to the unaccustomed taste — is in direct proportion to the exaltation of their spiritual life. The works of the great Sūfīs, and amongst the Christians of Jacopone da Todì, Ruysbroeck, Boehme, abound in illustrations of this law. Therefore we must not be surprised to find in Kabīr's songs — his desperate attempts to communicate his ecstasy and persuade other men to share it — a constant juxtaposition of concrete and meta-

physical language; swift alternations between the most intensely anthropomorphic, the most subtly philosophical, ways of apprehending man's communion with the Divine. The need for this alternation, and its entire naturalness for the mind which employs it, is rooted in his concept, or vision, of the Nature of God; and unless we make some attempt to grasp this, we shall not go far in our understanding of his poems.

Kabir belongs to that small group of supreme mystics — amongst whom St. Augustine, Ruysbroeck, and the Sūfī poet Jalālu'ddīn Rūmī are perhaps the chief — who have achieved that which we might call the synthetic vision of God. These have resolved the perpetual opposition between the personal and impersonal, the transcendent and immanent, static and dynamic aspects of the Divine Nature; between the Absolute of philosophy and the "sure

true Friend" of devotional religion. They have done this, not by taking these apparently incompatible concepts one after the other; but by ascending to a height of spiritual intuition at which they are, as Ruysbroeck said, "melted and merged in the Unity," and perceived as the completing opposites of a perfect Whole. This proceeding entails for them — and both Kabîr and Ruysbroeck expressly acknowledge it — a universe of three orders: Becoming, Being, and that which is "More than Being," *i.e.*, God.<sup>1</sup> God is here felt to be not the final abstraction, but the one actuality. He inspires, supports, indeed inhabits, both the durational, conditioned, finite world of Becoming and the unconditioned, non-successional, infinite world of Being; yet utterly transcends them both. He is the omnipresent

<sup>1</sup> Nos. VII and XLIX.

Reality, the "All-pervading" within Whom "the worlds are being told like beads." In His personal aspect He is the "beloved Fakīr," teaching and companioning each soul. Considered as Immanent Spirit, He is "the Mind within the mind." But all these are at best partial aspects of His nature, mutually corrective: as the Persons in the Christian doctrine of the Trinity — to which this theological diagram bears a striking resemblance — represent different and compensating experiences of the Divine Unity within which they are resumed. As Ruysbroeck discerned a plane of reality upon which "we can speak no more of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but only of One Being, the very substance of the Divine Persons"; so Kabīr says that "beyond both the limited *and* the limitless is He, the Pure Being."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> No. VII.

Brahma, then, is the Ineffable Fact compared with which "the distinction of the Conditioned from the Unconditioned is but a word": at once the utterly transcendent One of Absolutist philosophy, and the personal Lover of the individual soul — "common to all and special to each," as one Christian mystic has it. The need felt by Kabīr for both these ways of describing Reality is a proof of the richness and balance of his spiritual experience; which neither cosmic nor anthropomorphic symbols, taken alone, could express. More absolute than the Absolute, more personal than the human mind, Brahma therefore exceeds whilst He includes all the concepts of philosophy, all the passionate intuitions of the heart. He is the Great Affirmation, the font of energy, the source of life and love, the unique satisfaction of desire. His creative word is the *Om*

or "Everlasting Yea." The negative philosophy which strips from the Divine Nature all Its attributes and — defining Him only by that which He is not — reduces Him to an "Emptiness," is abhorrent to this most vital of poets. Brahma, he says, "may never be found in abstractions." He is the One Love who pervades the world, discerned in His fullness only by the eyes of love; and those who know Him thus share, though they may never tell, the joyous and ineffable secret of the universe.<sup>1</sup>

Now Kabir, achieving this synthesis between the personal and cosmic aspects of the Divine Nature, eludes the three great dangers which threaten mystical religion.

First, he escapes the excessive emotionalism, the tendency to an exclusively anthropomorphic devotion,

<sup>1</sup> Nos. VII, XXVI, LXXVI, XC.

which results from an unrestricted cult of Divine Personality, especially under an incarnational form; seen in India in the exaggerations of Krishna worship, in Europe in the sentimental extravagances of certain Christian saints.

Next, he is protected from the soul-destroying conclusions of pure monism, inevitable if its logical implications are pressed home: that is, the identity of substance between God and the soul, with its corollary of the total absorption of that soul in the Being of God as the goal of the spiritual life. For the thorough-going monist the soul, in so far as it is real, is substantially identical with God; and the true object of existence is the making patent of this latent identity, the realization which finds expression in the Vedāntist formula "That art thou." But Kabīr says that Brahma and the creature are



“ever distinct, yet ever united”; that the wise man knows the spiritual as well as the material world to “be no more than His footstool.”<sup>1</sup> The soul’s union with Him is a love union, a mutual inhabitation; that essentially dualistic relation which all mystical religion expresses, not a self-mergence which leaves no place for personality. This eternal distinction, the mysterious union-in-separateness of God and the soul, is a necessary doctrine of all sane mysticism; for no scheme which fails to find a place for it can represent more than a fragment of that soul’s intercourse with the spiritual world. Its affirmation was one of the distinguishing features of the Vaishnavite reformation preached by Rāmanuja; the principle of which descended through Rāmānanda to Kabīr.

Last, the warmly human and direct

<sup>1</sup> Nos. VII and IX.

apprehension of God as the supreme Object of love, the soul's comrade, teacher, and bridegroom, which is so passionately and frequently expressed in Kabīr's poems, balances and controls those abstract tendencies which are inherent in the metaphysical side of his vision of Reality : and prevents it from degenerating into that sterile worship of intellectual formulæ which became the curse of the Vedāntist school. For the mere intellectualist, as for the mere pietist, he has little approbation.<sup>1</sup> Love is throughout his "absolute sole Lord" : the unique source of the more abundant life which he enjoys, and the common factor which unites the finite and infinite worlds. All is soaked in love : that love which he described in almost Johannine language as the "Form of God." The whole of creation is the Play of the Eternal Lover ;

<sup>1</sup> Cf. especially Nos. LIX, LXVII, LXXV, XC, XCI.

the living, changing, growing expression of Brahma's love and joy. As these twin passions preside over the generation of human life, so "beyond the mists of pleasure and pain," Kabīr finds them governing the creative acts of God. His manifestation is love; His activity is joy. Creation springs from one glad act of affirmation: the Everlasting Yea, perpetually uttered within the depths of the Divine Nature.<sup>1</sup> In accordance with this concept of the universe as a Love-Game which eternally goes forward, a progressive manifestation of Brahma — one of the many notions which he adopted from the common stock of Hindu religious ideas, and illuminated by his poetic genius — movement, rhythm, perpetual change, forms an integral part of Kabīr's vision of Reality. Though the Eternal and Absolute is

<sup>1</sup> Nos. XVII, XXVI, LXXVI, LXXXII.

ever present to his consciousness, yet his concept of the Divine Nature is essentially dynamic. It is by the symbols of motion that he most often tries to convey it to us: as in his constant reference to dancing, or the strangely modern picture of that Eternal Swing of the Universe which is "held by the cords of love."<sup>1</sup>

It is a marked characteristic of mystical literature that the great contemplatives, in their effort to convey to us the nature of their communion with the supersensuous, are inevitably driven to employ some form of sensuous imagery: coarse and inaccurate as they know such imagery to be, even at the best. Our normal human consciousness is so completely committed to dependence on the senses, that the fruits of intuition itself are instinctively referred to them. In that intuition it seems

<sup>1</sup> No. XVI.

to the mystics that all the dim cravings and partial apprehensions of sense find perfect fulfilment. Hence their constant declaration that they *see* the uncreated light, they *hear* the celestial melody, they *taste* the sweetness of the Lord, they know an ineffable fragrance, they feel the very contact of love. "Him verily seeing and fully feeling, Him spiritually hearing and Him delectably smelling and sweetly swallowing," as Julian of Norwich has it. In those amongst them who develop psycho-sensorial automatisms, these parallels between sense and spirit may present themselves to consciousness in the form of hallucinations: as the light seen by Suso, the music heard by Rolle, the celestial perfumes which filled St. Catherine of Siena's cell, the physical wounds felt by St. Francis and St. Teresa. These are excessive dramatizations of the symbolism under

which the mystic tends instinctively to represent his spiritual intuition to the surface consciousness. Here, in the special sense-perception which he feels to be most expressive of Reality, his peculiar idiosyncrasies come out.

Now Kabīr, as we might expect in one whose reactions to the spiritual order were so wide and various, uses by turn all the symbols of sense. He tells us that he has "seen without sight" the effulgence of Brahma, tasted the divine nectar, felt the ecstatic contact of Reality, smelt the fragrance of the heavenly flowers. But he was essentially a poet and musician: rhythm and harmony were to him the garments of beauty and truth. Hence in his lyrics he shows himself to be, like Richard Rolle, above all things a musical mystic. Creation, he says again and again, is full of music: *it is music*. At the heart of the Universe

“white music is blossoming”: love weaves the melody, whilst renunciation beats the time. It can be heard in the home as well as in the heavens; discerned by the ears of common men as well as by the trained senses of the ascetic. Moreover, the body of every man is a lyre on which Brahma, “the source of all music,” plays. Everywhere Kabīr discerns the “Unstruck Music of the Infinite” — that celestial melody which the angel played to St. Francis, that ghostly symphony which filled the soul of Rolle with ecstatic joy.<sup>1</sup> The one figure which he adopts from the Hindu Pantheon and constantly uses, is that of Krishna the Divine Flute Player.<sup>2</sup> He sees the supernal music, too, in its visual embodiment, as rhythmical movement: that mysterious dance of the universe before the

<sup>1</sup> Nos. XVII, XVIII, XXXIX, XLI, LIV, LXXVI, LXXXIII, LXXXIX, XCVII. <sup>2</sup> Nos. L, LIII, LXVIII.

face of Brahma, which is at once an act of worship, and an expression of the infinite rapture of the Immanent God.<sup>1</sup>

Yet in this wide and rapturous vision of the universe Kabīr never loses touch with diurnal existence, never forgets the common life. His feet are firmly planted upon earth; his lofty and passionate apprehensions are perpetually controlled by the activity of a sane and vigorous intellect, by the alert common-sense so often found in persons of real mystical genius. The constant insistence on simplicity and directness, the hatred of all abstractions and philosophisings,<sup>2</sup> the ruthless criticism of external religion: these are amongst his most marked characteristics. God is the Root whence all manifestations, “material” and “spiritual,” alike proceed; and God is the only need of

<sup>1</sup> Nos. XXVI, XXXII, LXXVI.

<sup>2</sup> Nos. LXXV, LXXVIII, LXXX, XC.



man — “happiness shall be yours when you come to the Root.”<sup>1</sup> Hence to those who keep their eye on the “one thing needful,” denominations, creeds, ceremonies, the conclusions of philosophy, the disciplines of asceticism, are matters of comparative indifference. They represent merely the different angles from which the soul may approach that simple union with *Brahma* which is its goal; and are useful only in so far as they contribute to this consummation. So thorough-going is Kabir’s eclecticism, that he seems by turns Vedāntist and Vaishnavite, Pantheist and Transcendentalist, Brāhman and Sūfī. In the effort to tell the truth about that ineffable apprehension, so vast and yet so near, which controls his life, he seizes and twines together — as he might have woven together contrasting threads upon his loom —

<sup>1</sup>No. LXXX.

symbols and ideas drawn from the most violent and conflicting philosophies and faiths. All are needed if he is ever to suggest the character of that One whom the Upanishad called "the Sun-coloured Being who is beyond this Darkness": as all the colours of the spectrum are needed if we would demonstrate the simple richness of white light. In thus adapting traditional materials to his own use, he follows a method common amongst the mystics; who seldom exhibit any special love for originality of form. They will pour their wine into almost any vessel that comes to hand: generally using by preference — and lifting to new levels of beauty and significance — the religious or philosophic formulæ current in their own day. Thus we find that some of Kabīr's finest poems have as their subjects the commonplaces of Hindu philosophy and religion: the

Līlā or Sport of God, the Ocean of Bliss, the Bird of the Soul, Māyā, the Hundred-petalled Lotus, and the "Formless Form." Many, again, are soaked in Sūfī imagery and feeling. Others use as their material the ordinary surroundings and incidents of Indian life: the temple bells, the ceremony of the lamps, marriage, suttee, pilgrimage, the characters of the seasons; all felt by him in their mystical aspect, as sacraments of the soul's relation with Brahma. In many of these a particularly beautiful and intimate feeling for Nature is shown.<sup>1</sup>

In the collection of songs here translated, there will be found examples which illustrate nearly every aspect of Kabīr's thought, and all the fluctuations of the mystic's emotion: the ecstasy, the despair, the still beatitude, the eager self-devotion, the flashes of wide illumi-

<sup>1</sup> Nos. XV, XXIII, LXVII, LXXXVII, XCVIII.

nation, the moments of intimate love. His wide and deep vision of the universe, the "Eternal Sport" of creation (LXXXII), the worlds being "told like beads" within the Being of God (XIV, XVI, XVII, LXXVI), is here seen balanced by his lovely and delicate sense of intimate communion with the Divine Friend, Lover, Teacher of the soul (X, XI, XXIII, XXXV, LI, LXXXV, LXXXVI, LXXXVIII, XCII, XCIII; above all, the beautiful poem XXXIV). As these apparently paradoxical views of Reality are resolved in Brāhma, so all other opposites are reconciled in Him: bondage and liberty, love and renunciation, pleasure and pain (XVII, XXV, XL, LXXXIX). Union with Him is the one thing that matters to the soul, its destiny and its need (LI, LII, LIV, LXX, LXXIV, XCII, XCVI); and this union, this discovery of God, is the simplest and most natural

of all things if we would but grasp it (XLI, XLVI, LVI, LXXII, LXXVI, LXXVIII, XCVII). The union, however, is brought about by love, not by knowledge or ceremonial observances (XXXVIII, LIV, LV, LIX, XCI); and the apprehension which that union confers is ineffable — “neither This nor That,” as Ruysbroeck has it (IX, XLVI, LXXVI). Real worship and communion is in Spirit and in Truth (XL, XLI, LVI, LXIII, LXV, LXX), therefore idolatry is an insult to the Divine Lover (XLII, LXIX) and the devices of professional sanctity are useless apart from charity and purity of soul (LIV, LXV, LXVI). Since all things, and especially the heart of man, are God-inhabited, God-possessed (XXVI, LVI, LXXVI, LXXXIX, XCVII), He may best be found in the here-and-now: in the normal, human, bodily existence, the “mud” of material

life (III, IV, VI, XXI, XXXIX, XL, XLIII, XLVIII, LXXII). "We can reach the goal without crossing the road" (LXXVI) — not the cloister but the home is the proper theatre of man's efforts: and if he cannot find God there, he need not hope for success by going farther afield. "In the home is reality." There love and detachment, bondage and freedom, joy and pain play by turns upon the soul; and it is from their conflict that the Unstruck Music of the Infinite proceeds. "Kabīr says: None but Brahma can evoke its melodies."

### III

This version of Kabīr's songs is chiefly the work of Mr. Rabīndranāth Tagore, the trend of whose mystical genius makes him — as all who read these poems will see — a peculiarly sympathetic interpreter of Kabīr's

vision and thought. It has been based upon the printed Hindī text with Bengali translation of Mr. Kshiti Mohan Sen ; who has gathered from many sources — sometimes from books and manuscripts, sometimes from the lips of wandering ascetics and minstrels — a large collection of poems and hymns to which Kabīr's name is attached, and carefully sifted the authentic songs from the many spurious works now attributed to him. These painstaking labours alone have made the present undertaking possible.

We have also had before us a manuscript English translation of 116 songs made by Mr. Ajit Kumār Chakravarty from Mr. Kshiti Mohan Sen's text, and a prose essay upon Kabīr from the same hand. From these we have derived great assistance. A considerable number of readings from the translation have been adopted by us ;

whilst several of the facts mentioned in the essay have been incorporated into this introduction. Our most grateful thanks are due to Mr. Ajit Kumār Chakravarty for the extremely generous and unselfish manner in which he has placed his work at our disposal.

E. U.





# SONGS OF KABIR

## I

I. 13. *mo ko kahāṇḍ hūṇṛo vande*

**O** SERVANT, where dost thou  
seek Me?

Lo ! I am beside thee.

I am neither in temple nor in mosque :

I am neither in Kaaba nor in  
Kailash :

Neither am I in rites and ceremonies,  
nor in Yoga and renunciation.

If thou art a true seeker, thou shalt at  
once see Me : thou shalt meet Me  
in a moment of time.

Kabir says, "O Sadhu ! God is the  
breath of all breath."

## II

I. 16. *Santan jāṭ na pūcho nirgunīyān*

**I**T is needless to ask of a saint the  
caste to which he belongs ;

For the priest, the warrior, the trades-  
man, and all the thirty-six castes,  
alike are seeking for God.

It is but folly to ask what the caste of  
a saint may be ;

The barber has sought God, the washer-  
woman, and the carpenter —

Even Raidas was a seeker after God.

The Rishi Swapacha was a tanner by  
caste.

Hindus and Moslems alike have  
achieved that End, where remains  
no mark of distinction.

### III

I. 57. *sādho bhāī, jīvat hī karo āsā*

**O** FRIEND ! hope for Him whilst  
you live, know whilst you live,  
understand whilst you live : for  
in life deliverance abides.

If your bonds be not broken whilst  
living, what hope of deliverance  
in death ?

It is but an empty dream, that the soul  
shall have union with Him because  
it has passed from the body :

If He is found now, He is found then,  
If not, we do but go to dwell in the City  
of Death.

If you have union now, you shall have  
it hereafter.

Bathe in the truth, know the true Guru,  
have faith in the true Name !

Kabir says: "It is the Spirit of the  
quest which helps ; I am the slave  
of this Spirit of the quest."

## IV

I. 58. *bāgo nā jā re nā jā*

**D**O not go to the garden of flowers !  
O Friend ! go not there ;  
In your body is the garden of flowers.  
Take your seat on the thousand petals  
of the lotus, and there gaze on the  
Infinite Beauty.

## V

I. 63. *avadhū māyā tājī na jāī*

**T**ELL me, Brother, how can I renounce Maya?

When I gave up the tying of ribbons,  
still I tied my garment about me :

When I gave up tying my garment,  
still I covered my body in its folds.

So, when I give up passion, I see that  
anger remains ;

And when I renounce anger, greed is  
with me still ;

And when greed is vanquished, pride  
and vainglory remain ;

When the mind is detached and casts  
Maya away, still it clings to the  
letter.

Kabir says, "Listen to me, dear Sadhu !  
the true path is rarely found."

## VI

I. 83. *candā jhalkai yahi ghaṭ māhīn*

**T**HE moon shines in my body, but  
my blind eyes cannot see it:

The moon is within me, and so is the  
sun.

The unstruck drum of Eternity is  
sounded within me; but my deaf  
ears cannot hear it.

So long as man clamours for the *I* and  
the *Mine*, his works are as naught:

When all love of the *I* and the *Mine* is  
dead, then the work of the Lord  
is done.

For work has no other aim than the  
getting of knowledge:

When that comes, then work is put  
away.

The flower blooms for the fruit: when  
the fruit comes, the flower withers.

The musk is in the deer, but it seeks it  
not within itself: it wanders in  
quest of grass.

## VII

I. 85. *Sādho, Brahm alakh lakhāyā*

**W**HEN He Himself reveals Him-  
self, Brahma brings into mani-  
festation That which can never be  
seen.

As the seed is in the plant, as the shade  
is in the tree, as the void is in the  
sky, as infinite forms are in the  
void —

So from beyond the Infinite, the Infi-  
nite comes; and from the Infinite  
the finite extends.

The creature is in Brahma, and Brahma  
is in the creature: they are ever  
distinct, yet ever united.

He Himself is the tree, the seed, and  
the germ.

He Himself is the flower, the fruit, and  
the shade.

He Himself is the sun, the light, and  
the lighted.

He Himself is Brahma, creature, and  
Maya.

He Himself is the manifold form, the  
infinite space ;

He is the breath, the word, and the  
meaning.

He Himself is the limit and the limit-  
less : and beyond both the limited  
and the limitless is He, the Pure  
Being.

He is the Immanent Mind in Brahma  
and in the creature.

The Supreme Soul is seen within the  
soul,

The Point is seen within the Supreme  
Soul,

And within the Point, the reflection is  
seen again.



Kabir is blest because he has this  
supreme vision !

## VIII

I. 101. *is ghaṭ antar bāg baḡice*

**W**ITHIN this earthen vessel are  
bowers and groves, and within  
it is the Creator :

Within this vessel are the seven oceans  
and the unnumbered stars.

The touchstone and the jewel-ap-  
praiser are within ;

And within this vessel the Eternal  
soundeth, and the spring wells up.

Kabir says : "Listen to me, my Friend !  
My beloved Lord is within."

## IX

I. 104. *aisā lo nahin̄ taisā lo*

**O** HOW may I ever express that  
secret word ?

O how can I say He is not like this, and  
He is like that ?

If I say that He is within me, the universe is ashamed :

If I say that He is without me, it is falsehood.

He makes the inner and the outer worlds to be indivisibly one ;

The conscious and the unconscious, both are His footstools.

He is neither manifest nor hidden, he is neither revealed nor unrevealed :

There are no words to tell that which He is.

## X

I. 121. *tohi mori lagan lagāye re*..  
*phakir wā*

**T**O Thee Thou hast drawn my love,  
O Fakir !

I was sleeping in my own chamber, and  
Thou didst awaken me ; striking  
me with Thy voice, O Fakir !

I was drowning in the deeps of the

ocean of this world, and Thou  
 didst save me: upholding me  
 with Thine arm, O Fakir !  
 Only one word and no second — and  
 Thou hast made me tear off all  
 my bonds, O Fakir !  
 Kabir says, “Thou hast united Thy  
 heart to my heart, O Fakir !”

## XI

I. 131. *nis din khelat rahī sakhiyan  
 sang*

**I** PLAYED day and night with my  
 comrades, and now I am greatly  
 afraid.

So high is my Lord's palace, my heart  
 trembles to mount its stairs: yet  
 I must not be shy, if I would enjoy  
 His love.

My heart must cleave to my Lover;  
 I must withdraw my veil, and  
 meet Him with all my body:

Mine eyes must perform the ceremony  
of the lamps of love.

Kabir says : "Listen to me, friend : he  
understands who loves. If you  
feel not love's longing for your  
Beloved One, it is vain to adorn  
your body, vain to put unguent  
on your eyelids."

## XII

II. 24. *haṃsā, kaho purātan vāt*

**T**ELL me, O Swan, your ancient  
tale.

From what land do you come, O Swan?  
to what shore will you fly?

Where would you take your rest, O  
Swan, and what do you seek?

Even this morning, O Swan, awake,  
arise, follow me!

There is a land where no doubt nor  
sorrow have rule : where the terror  
of Death is no more.

There the woods of spring are a-bloom,  
 and the fragrant scent "He is Me"  
 is borne on the wind :

There the bee of the heart is deeply  
 immersed, and desires no other joy.

### XIII

#### II. 37. *anagadhiyā devā*

**O** LORD Increate, who will serve  
 Thee ?

Every votary offers his worship to the  
 God of his own creation : each day  
 he receives service —

None seek Him, the Perfect : Brahma,  
 the Indivisible Lord.

They believe in ten Avatars ; but no  
 Avatar can be the Infinite Spirit,  
 for he suffers the results of his  
 deeds :

The Supreme One must be other than  
 this.

The Yogi, the Sanyasi, the Ascetics,  
 are disputing one with another :

Kabir says, "O brother! he who has seen that radiance of love, he is saved."

## XIV

II. 56. *dariyā kī lahar dariyāo hai jī*

**T**HE river and its waves are one surf: where is the difference between the river and its waves?

When the wave rises, it is the water;  
and when it falls, it is the same water again. Tell me, Sir, where is the distinction?

Because it has been named as wave,  
shall it no longer be considered as water?

Within the Supreme Brahma, the worlds are being told like beads:  
Look upon that rosary with the eyes of wisdom.

## XV

II. 57. *janh khelat vasant riturāj*

**W**HERE Spring, the lord of the  
 seasons, reigneth, there the  
 Unstruck Music sounds of itself,  
 There the streams of light flow in all  
 directions ;  
 Few are the men who can cross to that  
 shore !  
 There, where millions of Krishnas stand  
 with hands folded,  
 Where millions of Vishnus bow their  
 heads,  
 Where millions of Brahmās are reading  
 the Vedas,  
 Where millions of Shivas are lost in  
 contemplation,  
 Where millions of Indras dwell in the sky,  
 Where the demi-gods and the munis  
 are unnumbered,  
 Where millions of Saraswatis, Goddess  
 of Music, play on the vina —

There is my Lord self-revealed : and  
the scent of sandal and flowers  
dwells in those deeps.

## XVI

II. 59. *janh cet acet khambh dōū*

**B**ETWEEN the poles of the con-  
scious and the unconscious, there  
has the mind made a swing :

Thereon hang all beings and all worlds,  
and that swing never ceases its  
sway.

Millions of beings are there : the sun  
and the moon in their courses are  
there :

Millions of ages pass, and the swing  
goes on.

All swing ! the sky and the earth and  
the air and the water ; and the  
Lord Himself taking form :

And the sight of this has made Kabir  
a servant.



## XVII

II. 61. *grah candra tapan jot varat hai*

**T**HE light of the sun, the moon, and  
the stars shines bright :

The melody of love swells forth, and  
the rhythm of love's detachment  
beats the time.

Day and night, the chorus of music fills  
the heavens ; and Kabir says,

“My Beloved One gleams like the  
lightning flash in the sky.”

Do you know how the moments per-  
form their adoration ?

Waving its row of lamps, the universe  
sings in worship day and night,

There are the hidden banner and the  
secret canopy :

There the sound of the unseen bells is  
heard.

Kabir says : “There adoration never  
ceases ; there the Lord of the Uni-  
verse sitteth on His throne.”

The whole world does its works and  
commits its errors : but few are  
the lovers who know the Beloved.

The devout seeker is he who mingles  
in his heart the double currents of  
love and detachment, like the  
mingling of the streams of Ganges  
and Jumna ;

In his heart the sacred water flows day  
and night ; and thus the round of  
births and deaths is brought to an  
end.

Behold what wonderful rest is in the  
Supreme Spirit ! and he enjoys it,  
who makes himself meet for it.

Held by the cords of love, the swing of  
the Ocean of Joy sways to and fro ;  
and a mighty sound breaks forth  
in song.

See what a lotus blooms there without  
water ! and Kabir says

“My heart’s bee drinks its nectar.”

What a wonderful lotus it is, that  
blossoms at the heart of the spinning  
wheel of the universe! Only a  
few pure souls know of its true  
delight.

Music is all around it, and there the  
heart partakes of the joy of the  
Infinite Sea.

Kabir says: "Dive thou into that  
Ocean of sweetness: thus let all  
errors of life and of death flee  
away."

Behold how the thirst of the five senses  
is quenched there! and the three  
forms of misery are no more!

Kabir says: "It is the sport of the  
Unattainable One: look within,  
and behold how the moon-beams  
of that Hidden One shine in you."

There falls the rhythmic beat of life  
and death:

Rapture wells forth, and all space is  
radiant with light.

There the Unstruck Music is sounded ;  
it is the music of the love of the  
three worlds.

There millions of lamps of sun and of  
moon are burning ;

There the drum beats, and the lover  
swings in play.

There love-songs resound, and light  
rains in showers ; and the wor-  
shipper is entranced in the taste  
of the heavenly nectar.

Look upon life and death ; there is no  
separation between them,

The right hand and the left hand are  
one and the same.

Kabir says : "There the wise man is  
speechless ; for this truth may never  
be found in Vedas or in books."

I have had my Seat on the Self-poised  
One,

I have drunk of the Cup of the In-  
effable,

I have found the Key of the Mystery,  
I have reached the Root of Union.

Travelling by no track, I have come  
to the Sorrowless Land: very  
easily has the mercy of the great  
Lord come upon me.

They have sung of Him as infinite and  
unattainable: but I in my medi-  
tations have seen Him without  
sight.

That is indeed the sorrowless land, and  
none know the path that leads  
there:

Only he who is on that path has surely  
transcended all sorrow.

Wonderful is that land of rest, to which  
no merit can win;

It is the wise who has seen it, it is the  
wise who has sung of it.

This is the Ultimate Word: but can  
any express its marvellous savour?

He who has savoured it once, he  
knows what joy it can give.

Kabir says : "Knowing it, the ignorant  
man becomes wise, and the wise  
man becomes speechless and silent,

The worshipper is utterly inebriated,  
His wisdom and his detachment are  
made perfect ;

He drinks from the cup of the in-  
breathings and the outbreathings  
of love."

There the whole sky is filled with  
sound, and there that music is  
made without fingers and without  
strings ;

There the game of pleasure and pain  
does not cease.

Kabir says : "If you merge your life  
in the Ocean of Life, you will find  
your life in the Supreme Land of  
Bliss."

What a frenzy of ecstasy there is in

every hour ! and the worshipper is  
pressing out and drinking the  
essence of the hours : he lives in  
the life of Brahma.

I speak truth, for I have accepted truth  
in life ; I am now attached to  
truth, I have swept all tinsel away.

Kabir says : "Thus is the worshipper  
set free from fear ; thus have all  
errors of life and of death left  
him."

There the sky is filled with music :

There it rains nectar :

There the harp-strings jingle, and there  
the drums beat.

What a secret splendour is there, in  
the mansion of the sky !

There no mention is made of the rising  
and the setting of the sun ;

In the ocean of manifestation, which is  
the light of love, day and night  
are felt to be one.

Joy for ever, no sorrow, no struggle !  
There have I seen joy filled to the brim,  
    perfection of joy ;  
No place for error is there.  
Kabir says : "There have I witnessed  
    the sport of One Bliss !"

I have known in my body the sport of  
    the universe : I have escaped from  
    the error of this world.  
The inward and the outward are be-  
    come as one sky, the Infinite and  
    the finite are united : I am drunken  
    with the sight of this All !  
This Light of Thine fulfils the uni-  
    verse : the lamp of love that burns  
    on the salver of knowledge.  
Kabir says : "There error cannot enter,  
    and the conflict of life and death  
    is felt no more."



## XVIII

II. 77. *maddh ākās āp jahan baithe*

**T**HE middle region of the sky,  
wherein the spirit dwelleth, is  
radiant with the music of light;  
There, where the pure and white music  
blossoms, my Lord takes His de-  
light.

In the wondrous effulgence of each hair  
of His body, the brightness of mill-  
ions of suns and of moons is lost.

On that shore there is a city, where the  
rain of nectar pours and pours, and  
never ceases.

Kabir says: "Come, O Dharmadas!  
and see my great Lord's Durbar."

## XIX

II. 20. *paramātam guru nikaṭ virājain*

**O** MY heart! the Supreme Spirit,  
the great Master, is near you:  
wake, oh wake!

Run to the feet of your Beloved: for

your Lord stands near to your  
head.

You have slept for unnumbered ages;  
this morning will you not wake?

## XX

II. 22. *man tu pār utar kanh jaihai*

**T**O what shore would you cross, O  
my heart? there is no traveller  
before you, there is no road:

Where is the movement, where is the  
rest, on that shore?

There is no water; no boat, no boat-  
man, is there;

There is not so much as a rope to tow  
the boat, nor a man to draw it.

No earth, no sky, no time, no thing, is  
there: no shore, no ford!

There, there is neither body nor mind:  
and where is the place that shall  
still the thirst of the soul? You  
shall find naught in that emptiness.

Be strong, and enter into your own

body: for there your foothold is firm. Consider it well, O my heart! go not elsewhere.

Kabir says: "Put all imaginations away, and stand fast in that which you are."

## XXI

### II. 33. *ghar ghar dīpak varai*

**L**AMPS burn in every house, O blind one! and you cannot see them.

One day your eyes shall suddenly be opened, and you shall see: and the fetters of death will fall from you.

There is nothing to say or to hear, there is nothing to do: it is he who is living, yet dead, who shall never die again.

Because he lives in solitude, therefore the Yogi says that his home is far away.

Your Lord is near : yet you are climbing the palm-tree to seek Him.

The Brahman priest goes from house to house and initiates people into faith :

Alas ! the true fountain of life is beside you, and you have set up a stone to worship.

Kabir says : "I may never express how sweet my Lord is. Yoga and the telling of beads, virtue and vice — these are naught to Him."

## XXII

II. 38. *Sādho, so satgur mohin bhāwai*

**O** BROTHER, my heart yearns for that true Guru, who fills the cup of true love, and drinks of it himself, and offers it then to me.

He removes the veil from the eyes, and gives the true Vision of Brahma :

He reveals the worlds in Him, and

makes me to hear the Unstruck  
Music :

He shows joy and sorrow to be one :  
He fills all utterance with love.

Kabir says : "Verily he has no fear,  
who has such a Guru to lead him  
to the shelter of safety !"

### XXIII

II. 40. *tinwir sãñjh kã gahirã āwai*

**T**HE shadows of evening fall thick  
and deep, and the darkness of love  
envelops the body and the mind.

Open the window to the west, and be  
lost in the sky of love ;

Drink the sweet honey that steepes the  
petals of the lotus of the heart.

Receive the waves in your body : what  
splendour is in the region of the  
sea !

Hark ! the sounds of conches and bells  
are rising.

Kabir says: "O brother, behold! the  
Lord is in this vessel of my body."

## XXIV

II. 48. *jis se rahani apār jagat men*

**M**ORE than all else do I cherish at  
heart that love which makes  
me to live a limitless life in this  
world.

It is like the lotus, which lives in the  
water and blooms in the water:  
yet the water cannot touch its  
petals, they open beyond its reach.

It is like a wife, who enters the fire at  
the bidding of love. She burns  
and lets others grieve, yet never  
dishonours love.

This ocean of the world is hard to cross:  
its waters are very deep. Kabir  
says: "Listen to me, O Sadhu!  
few there are who have reached its  
end."

## XXV

II. 45. *Hari ne apnā āp chipāyā*

**M**Y Lord hides Himself, and my  
Lord wonderfully reveals Him-  
self :

My Lord has encompassed me with  
hardness, and my Lord has cast  
down my limitations.

My Lord brings to me words of sorrow  
and words of joy, and He Himself  
heals their strife.

I will offer my body and mind to my  
Lord : I will give up my life, but  
never can I forget my Lord !

## XXVI

II. 75. *ōṅkār savai kōi sirjai*

**A**LL things are created by the Om ;  
The love-form is His body.

He is without form, without quality,  
without decay :

Seek thou union with Him !

But that formless God takes a thousand  
forms in the eyes of His creatures:  
He is pure and indestructible,  
His form is infinite and fathomless,  
He dances in rapture, and waves of  
form arise from His dance.  
The body and the mind cannot contain  
themselves, when they are touched  
by His great joy.  
He is immersed in all consciousness, all  
joys, and all sorrows ;  
He has no beginning and no end ;  
He holds all within His bliss.

## XXVII

II. 81. *satgur sōi dayā kar dīnhā*

**I**T is the mercy of my true Guru that  
has made me to know the un-  
known ;  
I have learned from Him how to walk  
without feet, to see without eyes,  
to hear without ears, to drink



without mouth, to fly without wings;

I have brought my love and my meditation into the land where there is no sun and moon, nor day and night.

Without eating, I have tasted of the sweetness of nectar; and without water, I have quenched my thirst.

Where there is the response of delight, there is the fullness of joy. Before whom can that joy be uttered?

Kabir says: "The Guru is great beyond words, and great is the good fortune of the disciple."

## XXVIII

II. 85. *nirgun āge sargun nācai*

**B**EFORE the Unconditioned, the Conditioned dances:

"Thou and I are one!" this trumpet proclaims.

The Guru comes, and bows down before  
the disciple :

This is the greatest of wonders.

## XXIX

II. 87. *Kabīr kab se bhaye vairāgī*

**G**ORAKHNATH asks Kabir :  
“Tell me, O Kabir, when did  
your vocation begin? Where did  
your love have its rise?”

Kabir answers :

“When He whose forms are manifold  
had not begun His play : when  
there was no Guru, and no disciple :  
when the world was not spread  
out : when the Supreme One was  
alone —

Then I became an ascetic ; then, O  
Gorakh, my love was drawn to  
Brahma.

Brahmā did not hold the crown on his  
head ; the god Vishnu was not

anointed as king; the power of  
Shiva was still unborn; when I  
was instructed in Yoga.

I became suddenly revealed in Benares,  
and Ramananda illumined me;

I brought with me the thirst for the  
Infinite, and I have come for the  
meeting with Him.

In simplicity will I unite with the  
Simple One; my love will surge  
up.

O Gorakh, march thou with His  
music!"

### XXX

#### II. 95. *yā tarivar men ek pakherū*

**O**N this tree is a bird: it dances  
in the joy of life.

None knows where it is: and who  
knows what the burden of its  
music may be?

Where the branches throw a deep

shade, there does it have its nest :  
 and it comes in the evening and  
 flies away in the morning, and says  
 not a word of that which it means.  
 None tell me of this bird that sings  
 within me.  
 It is neither coloured nor colourless : it  
 has neither form nor outline :  
 It sits in the shadow of love.  
 It dwells within the Unattainable, the  
 Infinite, and the Eternal ; and no  
 one marks when it comes and goes.  
 Kabir says : "O brother Sadhu ! deep  
 is the mystery. Let wise men seek  
 to know where rests that bird."

## XXXI

II. 100. *nis din sālai ghāw*

**A** SORE pain troubles me day and  
 night, and I cannot sleep ;  
 I long for the meeting with my Beloved,  
 and my father's house gives me  
 pleasure no more.

The gates of the sky are opened, the  
temple is revealed :

I meet my husband, and leave at His  
feet the offering of my body and  
my mind.

### XXXII

II. 103. *nacu re mero man matta hoy*

**D**ANCE, my heart ! dance to-day  
with joy.

The strains of love fill the days and  
the nights with music, and the  
world is listening to its melodies :

Mad with joy, life and death dance to  
the rhythm of this music. The  
hills and the sea and the earth  
dance. The world of man dances  
in laughter and tears.

Why put on the robe of the monk, and  
live aloof from the world in lonely  
pride ?

Behold ! my heart dances in the de-

light of a hundred arts; and the  
Creator is well pleased.

## XXXIII

II. 105. *man mast huā tab kyon bole*

**W**HERE is the need of words,  
when love has made drunken  
the heart?

I have wrapped the diamond in my  
cloak; why open it again and  
again?

When its load was light, the pan of the  
balance went up: now it is full,  
where is the need for weighing?

The swan has taken its flight to the  
lake beyond the mountains; why  
should it search for the pools and  
ditches any more?

Your Lord dwells within you: why  
need your outward eyes be opened?

Kabir says: "Listen, my brother! my  
Lord, who ravishes my eyes, has  
united Himself with me."

## XXXIV

II. 110. *mohi tohi lāgī kaise chūṭe*

**H**OW could the love between Thee  
and me sever?

As the leaf of the lotus abides on the  
water: so Thou art my Lord, and  
I am Thy servant.

As the night-bird Chakor gazes all  
night at the moon: so Thou art  
my Lord and I am Thy servant.

From the beginning until the ending  
of time, there is love between  
Thee and me; and how shall such  
love be extinguished?

Kabir says: "As the river enters into the  
ocean, so my heart touches Thee."

## XXXV

II. 113. *Vālam āwo hamāre geh re*

**M**Y body and my mind are grieved  
for the want of Thee;

O my Beloved! come to my house.

When people say I am Thy bride, I am  
ashamed ; for I have not touched  
Thy heart with my heart.

Then what is this love of mine ? I have  
no taste for food, I have no sleep ;  
my heart is ever restless within  
doors and without.

As water is to the thirsty, so is the  
lover to the bride. Who is there  
that will carry my news to my  
Beloved ?

Kabir is restless : he is dying for sight  
of Him.

## XXXVI

II. 126. *jāg piyārī ab kā sowai*

**O** FRIEND, awake, and sleep no  
more !

The night is over and gone, would you  
lose your day also ?

Others, who have wakened, have re-  
ceived jewels ;



84            SONGS OF KABIR

O foolish woman ! you have lost all  
whilst you slept.

Your lover is wise, and you are foolish,  
O woman !

You never prepared the bed of your  
husband :

O mad one ! you passed your time in  
silly play.

Your youth was passed in vain, for you  
did not know your Lord ;

Wake, wake ! See ! your bed is empty :  
He left you in the night.

Kabir says : "Only she wakes, whose  
heart is pierced with the arrow  
of His music."

XXXVII

I. 36. *sūr parkāś, tanh rain kahan  
pāīye*

**W**HERE is the night, when the  
sun is shining ? If it is night,  
then the sun withdraws its light.

Where knowledge is, can ignorance en-

dure? If there be ignorance, then  
knowledge must die.

If there be lust, how can love be there?  
Where there is love, there is no lust.

Lay hold on your sword, and join in  
the fight! Fight, O my brother,  
as long as life lasts.

Strike off your enemy's head, and  
there make an end of him quickly :  
then come, and bow your head at  
your King's Durbar.

He who is brave, never forsakes the  
battle: he who flies from it is no  
true fighter.

In the field of this body a great war  
goes forward, against passion, an-  
ger, pride, and greed :

It is in the kingdom of truth, content-  
ment and purity, that this battle  
is raging; and the sword that  
rings forth most loudly is the  
sword of His Name.

Kabir says: "When a brave knight  
takes the field, a host of cowards  
is put to flight.

It is a hard fight and a weary one, this  
fight of the truth-seeker: for the  
vow of the truth-seeker is more  
hard than that of the warrior,  
or of the widowed wife who would  
follow her husband.

For the warrior fights for a few hours,  
and the widow's struggle with  
death is soon ended:

But the truth-seeker's battle goes on  
day and night, as long as life lasts  
it never ceases."

### XXXVIII

I. 50. *bhram ke tālā lagā mahāl ye*

**T**HE lock of error shuts the gate,  
open it with the key of love:

Thus, by opening the door, thou shalt  
wake the Beloved.

Kabir says: "O brother! do not pass  
by such good fortune as this."

## XXXIX

I. 59. *Sādho, yah tan thāth tanvurekā*

**O** FRIEND! this body is His lyre;  
He tightens its strings, and draws  
from it the melody of Brahma.

If the strings snap and the keys  
slacken, then to dust must this in-  
strument of dust return:

Kabir says: "None but Brahma can  
evoke its melodies."

## XL

I. 65. *avadhū bhūle ko ghar lāwe*

**H**E is dear to me indeed who can  
call back the wanderer to his  
home. In the home is the true  
union, in the home is enjoyment of  
life: why should I forsake my  
home and wander in the forest?

If Brahma helps me to realize  
truth, verily I will find both bond-  
age and deliverance in home.

He is dear to me indeed who has power  
to dive deep into Brahma; whose  
mind loses itself with ease in His  
contemplation.

He is dear to me who knows Brahma,  
and can dwell on His supreme  
truth in meditation; and who can  
play the melody of the Infinite by  
uniting love and renunciation in life.

Kabir says: "The home is the abiding  
place; in the home is reality; the  
home helps to attain Him Who is  
real. So stay where you are, and all  
things shall come to you in time."

### XLI

I. 76. *santo sahaj samādh bhalī*

**O** SADHU! the simple union is the  
best.

Since the day when I met with my

Lord, there has been no end to  
the sport of our love:  
I shut not my eyes, I close not my ears,  
I do not mortify my body ;  
I see with eyes open and smile, and  
behold His beauty everywhere :  
I utter His Name, and whatever I see,  
it reminds me of Him ; whatever  
I do, it becomes His worship.  
The rising and the setting are one to  
me ; all contradictions are solved.  
Wherever I go, I move round Him,  
All I achieve is His service :  
When I lie down, I lie prostrate at His  
feet.

He is the only adorable one to me : I  
have none other.  
My tongue has left off impure words,  
it sings His glory day and night :  
Whether I rise or sit down, I can never  
forget Him ; for the rhythm of  
His music beats in my ears.

Kabir says: "My heart is frenzied,  
and I disclose in my soul what is  
hidden. I am immersed in that  
one great bliss which transcends all  
pleasure and pain."

## XLII

I. 79. *tīrath men to sab pānī hai*

**T**HERE is nothing but water at the  
holy bathing places; and I know  
that they are useless, for I have  
bathed in them.

The images are all lifeless, they cannot  
speak; I know, for I have cried  
aloud to them.

The Purana and the Koran are mere  
words; lifting up the curtain, I  
have seen.

Kabir gives utterance to the words of  
experience; and he knows very  
well that all other things are un-  
true.

## XLIII

I. 82. *pānī vic mīn piyāsī*

**I** LAUGH when I hear that the fish  
in the water is thirsty :

You do not see that the Real is in your  
home, and you wander from forest  
to forest listlessly !

Here is the truth ! Go where you will,  
to Benares or to Mathura ; if you  
do not find your soul, the world is  
unreal to you.

## XLIV

I. 93. *gagan math gaib nisān gadē*

**T**HE Hidden Banner is planted in  
the temple of the sky ; there the  
blue canopy decked with the moon  
and set with bright jewels is spread.

There the light of the sun and the  
moon is shining : still your mind  
to silence before that splendour.



Kabir says : "He who has drunk of this nectar, wanders like one who is mad."

## XLV

I. 97. *sādhō, ko hai kanh se āyo*

**W**HO are you, and whence do you come?

Where dwells that Supreme Spirit, and how does He have His sport with all created things?

The fire is in the wood; but who awakens it suddenly? Then it turns to ashes, and where goes the force of the fire?

The true guru teaches that He has neither limit nor infinitude.

Kabir says: "Brahma suits His language to the understanding of His hearer."

## XLVI

I. 98. *Sādho, sahajai kāyā sodho*

**O** SADHU! purify your body in  
the simple way.

As the seed is within the banyan tree,  
and within the seed are the flowers,  
the fruits, and the shade :

So the germ is within the body, and  
within that germ is the body again.

The fire, the air, the water, the earth,  
and the æther ; you cannot have  
these outside of Him.

O Kazi, O Pundit, consider it well :  
what is there that is not in the  
soul?

The water-filled pitcher is placed upon  
water, it has water within and  
without.

It should not be given a name, lest it  
call forth the error of dualism.

Kabir says : "Listen to the Word, the  
Truth, which is your essence. He

speaks the Word to Himself; and  
He Himself is the Creator.”

## XLVII

### I. 102. *tarvar ek mūl vin thādā*

**T**HERE is a strange tree, which  
stands without roots and bears  
fruits without blossoming;  
It has no branches and no leaves, it is  
lotus all over.

Two birds sing there; one is the Guru,  
and the other the disciple:

The disciple chooses the manifold fruits  
of life and tastes them, and the  
Guru beholds him in joy.

What Kabir says is hard to understand:  
“The bird is beyond seeking, yet it  
is most clearly visible. The Form-  
less is in the midst of all forms. I  
sing the glory of forms.”

## XLVIII

I. 107. *calat mansā acal kīnhī*

**I** HAVE stilled my restless mind, and  
my heart is radiant: for in That-  
ness I have seen beyond That-ness,  
in company I have seen the Com-  
rade Himself.

Living in bondage, I have set myself  
free: I have broken away from  
the clutch of all narrowness.

Kabir says: "I have attained the  
unattainable, and my heart is  
coloured with the colour of love."

## XLIX

I. 105. *jo dīsai, so to hai nāhīn*

**T**HAT which you see is not: and for  
that which is, you have no words.  
Unless you see, you believe not: what  
is told you you cannot accept.  
He who is discerning knows by the word;  
and the ignorant stands gaping.

Some contemplate the Formless, and  
others meditate on form : but the  
wise man knows that Brahma is  
beyond both.

That beauty of His is not seen of the  
eye : that metre of His is not heard  
of the ear.

Kabir says : "He who has found both  
love and renunciation never de-  
scends to death."

## L

I. 126. *muralī bajat akhaṇḍ sadāye*

**T**HE flute of the Infinite is played  
without ceasing, and its sound is  
love :

When love renounces all limits, it  
reaches truth.

How widely the fragrance spreads ! It  
has no end, nothing stands in its  
way.

The form of this melody is bright like

a million suns: incomparably  
sounds the vina, the vina of the  
notes of truth.

## LI

I. 129. *sakhiyo ham hūn bhai vala-  
māśī*

**D**EAR friend, I am eager to meet  
my Beloved! My youth has  
flowered, and the pain of separa-  
tion from Him troubles my breast.

I am wandering yet in the alleys of  
knowledge without purpose, but I  
have received His news in these  
alleys of knowledge.

I have a letter from my Beloved: in  
this letter is an unutterable mes-  
sage, and now my fear of death is  
done away.

Kabir says: "O my loving friend! I  
have got for my gift the Deathless  
One."

## LII

I. 130. *sāīn vin dard kareje hoy*

**W**HEN I am parted from my  
 Beloved, my heart is full of  
 misery : I have no comfort in the  
 day, I have no sleep in the night.  
 To whom shall I tell my sorrow?  
 The night is dark ; the hours slip by.  
 Because my Lord is absent, I start  
 up and tremble with fear.  
 Kabir says : "Listen, my friend ! there  
 is no other satisfaction, save in the  
 encounter with the Beloved."

## LIII

I. 122. *kaum muralī śabd śun ānand  
 bhayo*

**W**HAT is that flute whose music  
 thrills me with joy ?  
 The flame burns without a lamp ;  
 The lotus blossoms without a root ;

Flowers bloom in clusters ;  
The moon-bird is devoted to the moon ;  
With all its heart the rain-bird longs  
for the shower of rain ;  
But upon whose love does the Lover  
concentrate His entire life ?

## LIV

I. 112. *śuntā nahī dhun kī khabar*

**H**AVE you not heard the tune  
which the Unstruck Music is  
playing ? In the midst of the  
chamber the harp of joy is gently  
and sweetly played ; and where is  
the need of going without to hear  
it ?

If you have not drunk of the nectar of  
that One Love, what boots it  
though you should purge yourself  
of all stains ?

The Kazi is searching the words of the  
Koran, and instructing others :



but if his heart be not steeped in  
that love, what does it avail,  
though he be a teacher of men?

The Yogi dyes his garments with red :  
but if he knows naught of that  
colour of love, what does it avail  
though his garments be tinted?

Kabir says: "Whether I be in the  
temple or the balcony, in the camp  
or in the flower garden, I tell you  
truly that every moment my Lord  
is taking His delight in me."

## LV

I. 73. *bhakti kâ mārāg jhīnā re*

**S**UBTLE is the path of love !

Therein there is no asking and  
no not-asking,

There one loses one's self at His feet,  
There one is immersed in the joy of  
the seeking: plunged in the deeps  
of love as the fish in the water.

ॐ नमो

The lover is never slow in offering his  
head for his Lord's service.

Kabir declares the secret of this love.

LVI

I. 68. *bhāi kōi satguru sant kahāwai*

**H**E is the real Sadhu, who can re-  
veal the form of the Formless to  
the vision of these eyes :

Who teaches the simple way of attain-  
ing Him; that is other than rites  
or ceremonies :

Who does not make you close the doors,  
and hold the breath, and renounce  
the world :

Who makes you perceive the Supreme  
Spirit wherever the mind attaches  
itself :

Who teaches you to be still in the midst  
of all your activities.

Ever immersed in bliss, having no fear  
in his mind, he keeps the spirit of

union in the midst of all enjoyments.

The infinite dwelling of the Infinite Being is everywhere: in earth, water, sky, and air:

Firm as the thunderbolt, the seat of the seeker is established above the void.

He who is within is without: I see Him and none else.

## LVII

### I. 66. *sādhō śabd sādhnā kijai*

**R**ECEIVE that Word from which the Universe springeth!

That Word is the Guru; I have heard it, and become the disciple.

How many are there who know the meaning of that Word?

O Sadhu! practise that Word!

The Vedas and the Puranas proclaim it,  
The world is established in it,

The Rishis and devotees speak of it :  
But none knows the mystery of the  
Word.

The householder leaves his house when  
he hears it,

The ascetic comes back to love when  
he hears it,

The Six Philosophies expound it,  
The Spirit of Renunciation points to  
that Word,

From that Word the world-form has  
sprung,

That Word reveals all.

Kabir says : "But who knows whence  
the Word cometh?"

### LVIII

I. 63. *pīle pyālā ho matwālā*

**E**MPTY the Cup ! O be drunken !  
Drink the divine nectar of His  
Name !

Kabir says : "Listen to me, dear Sadhu !

From the sole of the foot to the crown  
of the head this mind is filled with  
poison."

LIX

I. 52. *khasm na cīnhai bāwri*

**O** MAN, if thou dost not know thine  
own Lord, whereof art thou so  
proud?

Put thy cleverness away: mere words  
shall never unite thee to Him.

Do not deceive thyself with the witness  
of the Scriptures:

Love is something other than this, and  
he who has sought it truly has  
found it.

LX

I. 56. *sukh sindh kī sair kā*

**T**HE savour of wandering in the  
ocean of deathless life has rid  
me of all my asking:

As the tree is in the seed, so all diseases  
are in this asking.

## LXI

I. 48. *sukh sāgar men āyke*

**W**HEN at last you are come to the  
ocean of happiness, do not go  
back thirsty.

Wake, foolish man! for Death stalks  
you. Here is pure water before  
you; drink it at every breath.

Do not follow the mirage on foot, but  
thirst for the nectar;

Dhruva, Prahlad, and Shukadeva have  
drunk of it, and also Raidas has  
tasted it:

The saints are drunk with love, their  
thirst is for love.

Kabir says: "Listen to me, brother!  
The nest of fear is broken.

Not for a moment have you come face  
to face with the world:

You are weaving your bondage of  
falsehood, your words are full of  
deception :

With the load of desires which you hold  
on your head, how can you be  
light ?”

Kabir says : “Keep within you truth,  
detachment, and love.”

## LXII

I. 35. *satī ko kaun sikhāwtā hai*

**W**HO has ever taught the widowed  
wife to burn herself on the pyre  
of her dead husband ?

And who has ever taught love to find  
bliss in renunciation ?

## LXIII

I. 39. *are man dhīraj kāhe na dharai*

**W**HY so impatient, my heart ?  
He who watches over birds,  
beasts, and insects,

He who cared for you whilst you were  
 yet in your mother's womb,  
 Shall He not care for you now that you  
 are come forth?

Oh my heart, how could you turn from  
 the smile of your Lord and wander  
 so far from Him?

You have left your Beloved and are  
 thinking of others: and this is  
 why all your work is in vain.

## LXIV

I. 117. *sāṇi se lagan kathin hai bhāi*

**H**OW hard it is to meet my Lord!  
 The rain-bird wails in thirst for  
 the rain: almost she dies of her  
 longing, yet she would have none  
 other water than the rain.

Drawn by the love of music, the deer  
 moves forward: she dies as she  
 listens to the music, yet she shrinks  
 not in fear.



108      SONGS OF KABIR

The widowed wife sits by the body of  
her dead husband: she is not  
afraid of the fire.

Put away all fear for this poor body.

LXV

I. 22. *jab main bhūlā re bhāi*

**O** BROTHER! when I was forgetful,  
my true Guru showed me the Way.

Then I left off all rites and ceremonies,  
I bathed no more in the holy water:

Then I learned that it was I alone who  
was mad, and the whole world  
beside me was sane; and I had  
disturbed these wise people.

From that time forth I knew no more  
how to roll in the dust in obeisance:

I do not ring the temple bell:

I do not set the idol on its throne:

I do not worship the image with flowers.  
 It is not the austerities that mortify the  
 flesh which are pleasing to the Lord,  
 When you leave off your clothes and  
 kill your senses, you do not please  
 the Lord :

The man who is kind and who practises  
 righteousness, who remains passive  
 amidst the affairs of the world,  
 who considers all creatures on  
 earth as his own self,

He attains the Immortal Being, the  
 true God is ever with him.

Kabir says: "He attains the true  
 Name whose words are pure, and  
 who is free from pride and con-  
 ceit."

## LXVI

### I. 20. *man na raṅgāye*

**T**HE Yogi dyes his garments, in-  
 stead of dyeing his mind in the  
 colours of love :

## 110 SONGS OF KABIR

He sits within the temple of the Lord,  
leaving Brahma to worship a stone.

He pierces holes in his ears, he has a  
great beard and matted locks, he  
looks like a goat :

He goes forth into the wilderness, kill-  
ing all his desires, and turns him-  
self into an eunuch :

He shaves his head and dyes his gar-  
ments ; he reads the Gita and be-  
comes a mighty talker.

Kabir says : “You are going to the  
doors of death, bound hand and  
foot !”

### LXVII

I. 9. *nā jāne sāhab kaisā hai*

**I** DO not know what manner of God  
is mine.

The Mullah cries aloud to Him : and  
why ? Is your Lord deaf ? The  
subtle anklets that ring on the

feet of an insect when it moves  
are heard of Him.

Tell your beads, paint your forehead  
with the mark of your God, and  
wear matted locks long and showy :  
but a deadly weapon is in your  
heart, and how shall you have  
God?

## LXVIII

III. 102. *ham se rahā na jāy*

**I** HEAR the melody of His flute, and  
I cannot contain myself !

The flower blooms, though it is not  
spring ; and already the bee has  
received its invitation.

The sky roars and the lightning flashes,  
the waves arise in my heart,

The rain falls ; and my heart longs for  
my Lord.

Where the rhythm of the world rises  
and falls, thither my heart has  
reached :

112      SONGS OF KABIR

There the hidden banners are fluttering  
in the air.

Kabir says: "My heart is dying,  
though it lives."

LXIX

III. 2. *jo khodāy masjid vastu hai*

**I**F God be within the mosque, then  
to whom does this world belong?  
If Ram be within the image which you  
find upon your pilgrimage, then  
who is there to know what happens  
without?

Hari is in the East: Allah is in the  
West. Look within your heart,  
for there you will find both Karim  
and Ram;

All the men and women of the world  
are His living forms.

Kabir is the child of Allah and of Ram:  
He is my Guru, He is my Pir.

## LXX

III. 9. *śīl santosh sadā samadrishti*

**H**E who is meek and contented, he  
 who has an equal vision, whose  
 mind is filled with the fullness of  
 acceptance and of rest ;

He who has seen Him and touched  
 Him, he is freed from all fear and  
 trouble.

To him the perpetual thought of God  
 is like sandal paste smeared on  
 the body, to him nothing else is  
 delight :

His work and his rest are filled with  
 music : he sheds abroad the radi-  
 ance of love.

Kabir says : "Touch His feet, who is  
 one and indivisible, immutable  
 and peaceful ; who fills all vessels  
 to the brim with joy, and whose  
 form is love."

## LXXI

III. 13. *sādh saṅgat pītam*

**G**O thou to the company of the  
good, where the Beloved One  
has His dwelling-place :

Take all thy thoughts and love and  
instruction from thence.

Let that assembly be burnt to ashes  
where His Name is not spoken !

Tell me, how couldst thou hold a  
wedding-feast, if the bridegroom  
himself were not there ?

Waver no more, think only of the Be-  
loved ;

Set not thy heart on the worship of  
other gods, there is no worth in  
the worship of other masters.

Kabir deliberates and says : "Thus  
thou shalt never find the Be-  
loved !"

## LXXII

III. 26. *tor hīrā hirāihwā kin caḍ men*

**T**HE jewel is lost in the mud, and  
all are seeking for it ;

Some look for it in the east, and some  
in the west ; some in the water  
and some amongst stones.

But the servant Kabir has appraised it  
at its true value, and has wrapped  
it with care in the end of the  
mantle of his heart.

## LXXIII

III. 26. *āyau dīn gaune kai ho*

**T**HE palanquin came to take me  
away to my husband's home,  
and it sent through my heart a  
thrill of joy ;

But the bearers have brought me into  
the lonely forest, where I have no  
one of my own.



O bearers, I entreat you by your feet,  
 wait but a moment longer: let me  
 go back to my kinsmen and friends,  
 and take my leave of them.

The servant Kabir sings: "O Sadhu!  
 finish your buying and selling,  
 have done with your good and  
 your bad: for there are no mar-  
 kets and no shops in the land to  
 which you go."

## LXXIV

III. 30. *are dīl, prem nagar kā ant na  
 pāyā*

O MY heart! you have not known  
 all the secrets of this city of  
 love: in ignorance you came, and  
 in ignorance you return.

O my friend, what have you done with  
 this life? You have taken on your  
 head the burden heavy with stones,  
 and who is to lighten it for you?

Your Friend stands on the other shore,  
but you never think in your mind  
how you may meet with Him :

The boat is broken, and yet you sit  
ever upon the bank ; and thus you  
are beaten to no purpose by the  
waves.

The servant Kabir asks you to con-  
sider ; who is there that shall be-  
friend you at the last ?

You are alone, you have no companion :  
you will suffer the consequences  
of your own deeds.

## LXXV

III. 55. *ved kahe sargun ke āge*

**T**HE Vedas say that the Uncondi-  
tioned stands beyond the world  
of Conditions.

O woman, what does it avail thee to  
dispute whether He is beyond all  
or in all ?

See thou everything as thine own  
dwelling place: the mist of pleasure  
and pain can never spread there.  
There Brahma is revealed day and  
night: there light is His garment,  
light is His seat, light rests on thy  
head.

Kabir says: "The Master, who is true,  
He is all light."

## LXXVI

III. 48. *tu surat nain nihār*

**O**PEN your eyes of love, and see  
Him who pervades this world!  
consider it well, and know that  
this is your own country.

When you meet the true Guru, He will  
awaken your heart;

He will tell you the secret of love and  
detachment, and then you will  
know indeed that He transcends  
this universe.

This world is the City of Truth, its  
maze of paths enchants the heart :  
We can reach the goal without crossing  
the road, such is the sport unending.

Where the ring of manifold joys ever  
dances about Him, there is the  
sport of Eternal Bliss.

When we know this, then all our receiving and renouncing is over ;  
Thenceforth the heat of having shall  
never scorch us more.

He is the Ultimate Rest unbounded :  
He has spread His form of love throughout all the world.

From that Ray which is Truth, streams  
of new forms are perpetually springing : and He pervades those forms.  
All the gardens and groves and bowers  
are abounding with blossom ; and  
the air breaks forth into ripples  
of joy.

## 120      SONGS OF KABIR

There the swan plays a wonderful game,  
There the Unstruck Music eddies  
    around the Infinite One;

There in the midst the Throne of the  
    Unheld is shining, whereon the  
    great Being sits —

Millions of suns are shamed by the  
    radiance of a single hair of His  
    body.

On the harp of the road what true  
    melodies are being sounded ! and  
    its notes pierce the heart :

There the Eternal Fountain is playing  
    its endless life-streams of birth  
    and death.

They call Him Emptiness who is the  
    Truth of Truths, in Whom all  
    truths are stored !

There within Him creation goes for-  
    ward, which is beyond all philoso-  
    phy ; for philosophy cannot attain  
    to Him :

There is an endless world, O my  
Brother! and there is the Name-  
less Being, of whom naught can  
be said.

Only he knows it who has reached that  
region: it is other than all that  
is heard and said.

No form, no body, no length, no  
breadth is seen there: how can I  
tell you that which it is?

He comes to the Path of the Infinite  
on whom the grace of the Lord  
descends: he is freed from births  
and deaths who attains to Him.

Kabir says: "It cannot be told by the  
words of the mouth, it cannot be  
written on paper:

It is like a dumb person who tastes a  
sweet thing — how shall it be ex-  
plained?"

LXXVII

III. 60. *cal haṃsā wā des jahan*

**O** MY heart! let us go to that  
country where dwells the Be-  
loved, the ravisher of my heart!

There Love is filling her pitcher from  
the well, yet she has no rope where-  
with to draw water;

There the clouds do not cover the sky,  
yet the rain falls down in gentle  
showers:

O bodiless one! do not sit on your  
doorstep; go forth and bathe  
yourself in that rain!

There it is ever moonlight and never  
dark; and who speaks of one sun  
only? that land is illuminate with  
the rays of a million suns.

## LXXVIII

III. 63. *kahain Kabir, sūno ho sādho*

**K**ABIR says: "O Sadhu! hear my deathless words. If you want your own good, examine and consider them well.

You have estranged yourself from the Creator, of whom you have sprung: you have lost your reason, you have bought death.

All doctrines and all teachings are sprung from Him, from Him they grow: know this for certain, and have no fear.

Hear from me the tidings of this great truth!

Whose name do you sing, and on whom do you meditate? O, come forth from this entanglement!

He dwells at the heart of all things, so why take refuge in empty desolation?



124      SONGS OF KABIR

If you place the Guru at a distance  
from you, then it is but the dis-  
tance that you honour :

If indeed the Master be far away, then  
who is it else that is creating this  
world ?

When you think that He is not here,  
then you wander further and  
further away, and seek Him in  
vain with tears.

Where He is far off, there He is un-  
attainable : where He is near, He  
is very bliss.

Kabir says : "Lest His servant should  
suffer pain He pervades him  
through and through."

Know yourself then, O Kabir ; for He  
is in you from head to foot.

Sing with gladness, and keep your seat  
unmoved within your heart.

## LXXIX

III. 66. *nā main dharmī nahin  
adharmī*

I AM neither pious nor ungodly,  
I live neither by law nor by sense,  
I am neither a speaker nor hearer,  
I am neither a servant nor master,  
I am neither bond nor free,  
I am neither detached nor attached.  
I am far from none : I am near to none.  
I shall go neither to hell nor to heaven.  
I do all works ; yet I am apart from  
all works.

Few comprehend my meaning : he who  
can comprehend it, he sits un-  
moved.

Kabir seeks neither to establish nor to  
destroy.

## LXXX

III. 69. *satta nām hai sab ten nyārā*

**T**HE true Name is like none other name !

The distinction of the Conditioned from the Unconditioned is but a word :

The Unconditioned is the seed, the Conditioned is the flower and the fruit.

Knowledge is the branch, and the Name is the root.

Look, and see where the root is : happiness shall be yours when you come to the root.

The root will lead you to the branch, the leaf, the flower, and the fruit :

It is the encounter with the Lord, it is the attainment of bliss, it is the reconciliation of the Conditioned and the Unconditioned.

## LXXXI

III. 74. *pratham ek jo āpai āp*

**I**N the beginning was He alone, sufficient unto Himself: the formless, colourless, and unconditioned Being.

Then was there neither beginning, middle, nor end ;

Then were no eyes, no darkness, no light ;

Then were no ground, air, nor sky ; no fire, water, nor earth ; no rivers like the Ganges and the Jumna, no seas, oceans, and waves.

Then was neither vice nor virtue ; scriptures there were not, as the Vedas and Puranas, nor as the Koran.

Kabir ponders in his mind and says, "Then was there no activity: the Supreme Being remained merged in the unknown depths of His own self."

128      SONGS OF KABIR

The Guru neither eats nor drinks,  
neither lives nor dies :

Neither has He form, line, colour, nor  
vesture.

He who has neither caste nor clan nor  
anything else — how may I de-  
scribe His glory ?

He has neither form nor formlessness,

He has no name,

He has neither colour nor colourless-  
ness,

He has no dwelling-place.

LXXXII

III. 76. *kahain Kabir vicār ke*

**K**ABIR ponders and says: "He  
who has neither caste nor coun-  
try, who is formless and without  
quality, fills all space."

The Creator brought into being the  
Game of Joy : and from the word  
Om the Creation sprang.

The earth is His joy ; His joy is the sky ;

His joy is the flashing of the sun and the moon ;

His joy is the beginning, the middle, and the end ;

His joy is eyes, darkness, and light.

Oceans and waves are His joy : His joy the Sarasvati, the Jumna, and the Ganges.

The Guru is One : and life and death, union and separation, are all His plays of joy !

His play the land and water, the whole universe !

His play the earth and the sky !

In play is the Creation spread out, in play it is established. The whole world, says Kabir, rests in His play, yet still the Player remains unknown.

## LXXXIII

III. 84. *jhī jhī jantar bājai*

**T**HE harp gives forth murmurous music; and the dance goes on without hands and feet.

It is played without fingers, it is heard without ears: for He is the ear, and He is the listener.

The gate is locked, but within there is fragrance: and there the meeting is seen of none.

The wise shall understand it.

## LXXXIV

III. 89. *mor phakirwā māṅgi jāy*

**T**HE Beggar goes a-begging, but I could not even catch sight of Him:

And what shall I beg of the Beggar? He gives without my asking.

Kabir says: "I am His own: now let that befall which may befall!"

## LXXXV

III. 90. *naihar se jiyarā phāt re*

**M**Y heart cries aloud for the house  
 of my lover ; the open road and  
 the shelter of a roof are all one to  
 her who has lost the city of her  
 husband.

My heart finds no joy in anything : my  
 mind and my body are distraught.  
 His palace has a million gates, but there  
 is a vast ocean between it and me :  
 How shall I cross it, O friend ? for end-  
 less is the outstretching of the path.

How wondrously this lyre is wrought !  
 When its strings are rightly strung,  
 it maddens the heart : but when  
 the keys are broken and the strings  
 are loosened, none regard it more.  
 I tell my parents with laughter that I  
 must go to my Lord in the  
 morning ;



They are angry, for they do not want me to go, and they say: "She thinks she has gained such dominion over her husband that she can have whatsoever she wishes; and therefore she is impatient to go to him."

Dear friend, lift my veil lightly now; for this is the night of love.

Kabir says: "Listen to me! My heart is eager to meet my lover: I lie sleepless upon my bed. Remember me early in the morning!"

## LXXXVI

III. 96. *jīw mahal men Śiw pahunwā*

**S**ERVE your God, who has come into this temple of life!

Do not act the part of a madman, for the night is thickening fast.

He has awaited me for countless ages,

for love of me He has lost His  
heart :

Yet I did not know the bliss that was  
so near to me, for my love was not  
yet awake.

But now, my Lover has made known  
to me the meaning of the note that  
struck my ear :

Now, my good fortune is come.

Kabir says : "Behold ! how great is  
my good fortune ! I have received  
the unending caress of my Be-  
loved !"

## LXXXVII

I. 71. *gagan ghaṭā ghahar ānī sādho*

CLOUDS thicken in the sky ! O,  
listen to the deep voice of their  
roaring ;

The rain comes from the east with its  
monotonous murmur.

Take care of the fences and boundaries

of your fields, lest the rains overflow them ;

Prepare the soil of deliverance, and let the creepers of love and renunciation be soaked in this shower.

It is the prudent farmer who will bring his harvest home ; he shall fill both his vessels, and feed both the wise men and the saints.

## LXXXVIII

III. 118. *āj din ke main jāun balihārī*

**T**HIS day is dear to me above all other days, for to-day the Beloved Lord is a guest in my house ; My chamber and my courtyard are beautiful with His presence.

My longings sing His Name, and they are become lost in His great beauty :

I wash His feet, and I look upon His Face ; and I lay before Him as an

offering my body, my mind, and  
all that I have.

What a day of gladness is that day in  
which my Beloved, who is my  
treasure, comes to my house !

All evils fly from my heart when I see  
my Lord.

“My love has touched Him ; my heart  
is longing for the Name which is  
Truth.”

Thus sings Kabir, the servant of all  
servants.

## LXXXIX

I. 100. *kōi śuntā hai jñānī rāg gagan*  
*men*

**I**S there any wise man who will listen  
to that solemn music which arises  
in the sky ?

For He, the Source of all music, makes  
all vessels full fraught, and rests in  
fullness Himself.

136      SONGS OF KABIR

He who is in the body is ever athirst,  
for he pursues that which is in part :  
But ever there wells forth deeper and  
deeper the sound "He is this —  
this is He"; fusing love and re-  
nunciation into one.

Kabir says: "O brother! that is the  
Primal Word."

XC

I. 108. *main kāse būjhaun*

**T**O whom shall I go to learn about  
my Beloved?

Kabir says: "As you never may find  
the forest if you ignore the tree, so  
He may never be found in abstrac-  
tions."

XCI

III. 12. *saṃskirit bhāshā padhi līnhā*

**I** HAVE learned the Sanskrit lan-  
guage, so let all men call me wise :  
But where is the use of this, when I

am floating adrift, and parched  
with thirst, and burning with the  
~~heat of desire?~~

To no purpose do you bear on your  
head this load of pride and vanity.  
Kabir says: "Lay it down in the dust,  
and go forth to meet the Beloved.  
Address Him as your Lord."

## XCII

III. 110. *carkhā calai surat virahin kā*

**T**HE woman who is parted from her  
lover spins at the spinning wheel.  
The city of the body arises in its  
beauty; and within it the palace  
of the mind has been built.

The wheel of love revolves in the sky,  
and the seat is made of the jewels  
of knowledge:

What subtle threads the woman weaves,  
and makes them fine with love  
and reverence!

138      SONGS OF KABIR

Kabir says: "I am weaving the garland of day and night. When my Lover comes and touches me with His feet, I shall offer Him my tears."

XCIII

III. 111. *kotīn bhānu candra tārāgan*

**B**ENEATH the great umbrella of my King millions of suns and moons and stars are shining !

He is the Mind within my mind : He is the Eye within mine eye.

Ah, could my mind and eyes be one !  
Could my love but reach to my Lover ! Could but the fiery heat of my heart be cooled !

Kabir says: "When you unite love with the Lover, then you have love's perfection."

## XCIV

I. 92. *avadhū begam des hamārā*

**O** SADHU! my land is a sorrow-  
less land.

I cry aloud to all, to the king and  
the beggar, the emperor and the  
fakir —

Whosoever seeks for shelter in the  
Highest, let all come and settle  
in my land!

Let the weary come and lay his burdens  
here!

So live here, my brother, that you may  
cross with ease to that other shore.

It is a land without earth or sky, with-  
out moon or stars;

For only the radiance of Truth shines  
in my Lord's Durbar.

Kabir says: "O beloved brother!  
naught is essential save Truth."



## XCV

I. 109. *sānī ke sangān sāsūr āī*

**I** CAME with my Lord to my Lord's home: but I lived not with Him and I tasted Him not, and my youth passed away like a dream.

On my wedding night my women-friends sang in chorus, and I was anointed with the unguents of pleasure and pain:

But when the ceremony was over, I left my Lord and came away, and my kinsman tried to console me upon the road.

Kabir says, "I shall go to my Lord's house with my love at my side; then shall I sound the trumpet of triumph!"

## XCVI

I. 75. *samujh dekh man mīt piyarwā*

**O** FRIEND, dear heart of mine,  
think well! if you love indeed,  
then why do you sleep?

If you have found Him, then give  
yourself utterly, and take Him to  
you.

Why do you loose Him again and  
again?

If the deep sleep of rest has come to  
your eyes, why waste your time  
making the bed and arranging  
the pillows?

Kabir says: "I tell you the ways of  
love! Even though the head itself  
must be given, why should you  
weep over it?"

XCVII

II. 90. *sāhab ham men sāhab tum men*

**T**HE Lord is in me, the Lord is in  
you, as life is in every seed. O  
servant ! put false pride away, and  
seek for Him within you.

A million suns are ablaze with light,  
The sea of blue spreads in the sky,  
The fever of life is stilled, and all stains  
are washed away ; when I sit in  
the midst of that world.

Hark to the unstruck bells and drums !  
Take your delight in love !

Rains pour down without water, and  
the rivers are streams of light.

One Love it is that pervades the whole  
world, few there are who know it  
fully :

They are blind who hope to see it by  
the light of reason, that reason  
which is the cause of separation —  
The House of Reason is very far away !

॥ १० ॥

How blessed is Kabir, that amidst this  
great joy he sings within his own  
vessel.

It is the music of the meeting of soul  
with soul;

It is the music of the forgetting of  
sorrows;

It is the music that transcends all com-  
ing in and all going forth.

## XCVIII

II. 98. *ritu phāgun niyarānī*

**T**HE month of March draws near: ah,  
who will unite me to my Lover?  
How shall I find words for the beauty  
of my Beloved? For He is merged  
in all beauty.

His colour is in all the pictures of the  
world, and it bewitches the body  
and the mind.

Those who know this, know what is  
this unutterable play of the Spring.

Kabir says: "Listen to me, brother!  
there are not many who have  
found this out."

XCIX

II. 111. *nārad pyār so antar nāhī*

**O**H Narad! I know that my Lover  
cannot be far:

When my Lover wakes, I wake; when  
He sleeps, I sleep.

He is destroyed at the root who gives  
pain to my Beloved.

Where they sing His praise, there I  
live;

When He moves, I walk before Him:  
my heart yearns for my Beloved.

The infinite pilgrimage lies at His  
feet, a million devotees are seated  
there.

Kabir says: "The Lover Himself re-  
veals the glory of true love."

## C

II. 122. *kōi prem kī peṅ jhulāo re*

**H**ANG up the swing of love to-day !

Hang the body and the mind  
between the arms of the Beloved,  
in the ecstasy of love's joy :

Bring the tearful streams of the rainy  
clouds to your eyes, and cover  
your heart with the shadow of  
darkness :

Bring your face nearer to His ear, and  
speak of the deepest longings of  
your heart.

Kabir says: "Listen to me, brother !  
bring the vision of the Beloved in  
your heart."

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"Nothing perhaps could contrast more strongly with the normal Western idea of the Indian mystic than the Maharshi's long and active career, the character of the vision which inspired it, the doctrine which he taught. The Christian promise of 'more abundant life' as a fruit of the love and knowledge of God has received no clearer fulfilment. His missionary labours, his arduous and enthusiastic pilgrimages, his genius for friendship, his deep passion for nature, his sane and balanced outlook upon humanity, his intense interest in the events of his time, no less than the ecstatic life of contemplation which ran side by side with his active career — all are rooted in this. He was no amateur of a thin and rarefied spirituality, but that rare creation, a whole man."

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